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A P P E N D I X

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*Community Report*



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# Purcellville Urban Growth Area Community Report

December 15, 1993

## Introduction

Throughout its growth and development, the Town of Purcellville has served as the cultural and commercial hub of the surrounding farm community. Today, Purcellville is a thriving town of approximately 2000 who feel a sense of pride in their community and a commitment to maintaining the small town atmosphere that is treasured by residents. As the largest incorporated community in western Loudoun, the Town and its environs are experiencing intense pressure for non-agriculturally related development. The General Plan, adopted by the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors in 1991, established an Urban Growth Area around the Town of Purcellville to encourage compact development in and around the Town, where public utilities and services will be available in the future, rather than in rural areas.

The Purcellville Urban Growth Area (UGA) covers approximately 3,100 acres (4.7 square miles) of land surrounding, but not including, the incorporated Town of Purcellville. The General Plan permits land in the Urban Growth Area around Purcellville to be served by Town utilities and identifies land in the Urban Growth Area as the logical area for the Town's growth and expansion over the next 50 years. The impetus for a detailed Purcellville Urban Growth Area Management Plan (PUGAMP) grew out of a joint annexation agreement approved by the County and the Town in May 1993. The annexation agreement specifically requires that the Town and the County appoint a joint citizen's committee to prepare a joint comprehensive plan for the UGA to address land use, development densities, transportation, proffer guidelines and public utilities and facilities.

The County and the Town are committed to public participation and community involvement during preparation of the PUGAMP. Therefore, the Town, the County and the PUGAMP Citizens' Committee invited landowners and residents of the Purcellville area to participate in a series of community meetings to share their visions of the future for the Urban Growth Area and to ensure that public opinion will help set the fundamental direction of the plan. This is a report of what was said at those meetings and the starting point for the work of the Citizens' Committee.

## The Community Discussion

The Purcellville UGA plan community meetings were conducted on November 8, November 22, and December 6, 1993. An average of 30 people, including members of the PUGAMP Citizens' Committee, attended

and participated in each of the meetings. Over the course of these meetings, planning staff from the County and the Town worked with area residents and landowners to identify what people hope will occur in the Purcellville area and what they foresee as key issues in the development of the plan. The three meetings each had a specific purpose:

- Workshop One:** Citizens were asked to share their visions for the future of the Purcellville area; they were also asked to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the area and the threats and opportunities that might affect that vision;
- Workshop Two:** Citizens were asked to review current General Plan policies proposed for the Purcellville UGA and identify needed changes or enhancements;
- Workshop Three:** Citizens were given the opportunity to make comments regarding specific properties or individual concerns and issues.

## Community Workshop One

### Vision for the Purcellville Area

It is the hope of citizens of the Purcellville area that the Town will continue to serve as a thriving business, social and cultural center for western Loudoun County. In order to accommodate new growth without losing the present small town atmosphere and sense of community treasured by residents of the area, new development must respect the existing community and build upon existing features that make Purcellville unique. Growth should be planned and orderly to ensure that essential services and utilities are not overburdened and to ensure that Purcellville will maintain a distinct identity and sense of heritage.

New development in the area should offer a variety of housing and employment opportunities that promote affordability and a balanced, fiscally stable tax base. A revitalized downtown should be the core of a thriving commercial community that accommodates locally owned small businesses. The area should also provide opportunities for larger scale retail and office uses that cannot be accommodated downtown. New development should be designed to complement the character of the existing Town and should be compatible in design, density and scale with existing neighborhoods. Important scenic, environmental, open space, agricultural and historic resources should be protected by encouraging clustered and compact development. Overall, the Purcellville area should be a desirable place to live, work and raise a family.

## Community Vision

*Strengths*

*Weaknesses*

*Threats*

*Opportunities*

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## **Strengths**

Of all the positive attributes associated with life in the Purcellville area, the small town atmosphere enjoyed by residents stands out as the most important. Residents noted that Purcellville is a neighborly, diverse community and a good place to raise a family. Some of the benefits associated with small town living were also listed as positive attributes of the Purcellville area. Small, locally owned businesses offer personal attention and service to customers in the Purcellville area. Purcellville, as the second largest town in the County and the hub for a large rural hinterland, offers diverse and convenient community facilities such as a community center, recreation facilities, a library, a post office, and schools. The beauty of natural features such as the rural countryside, the Blue Ridge mountains, stream valleys and historic buildings also make the Purcellville area an appealing place to live and contribute to the area's sense of place and history.

## **Weaknesses**

Empty storefronts, lack of a non-residential tax base and the decline of Purcellville's downtown were cited by residents as key problems confronting the Purcellville area today. Although some of these problems are a result of the current national recession, residents also identified lack of a positive pro-business policy as a factor. New shopping centers in Purcellville have provided additional shopping opportunities to residents of the area, but they are also perceived to be drawing business away from downtown shops. Citizens feel that downtown needs to be revitalized to attract new businesses and bolster the ones that are already there. In addition to economic concerns, there were a variety of concerns about new development; citizens fear that too much new development will threaten the current small town way of life. Others are concerned that the desires of landowners are not being considered.

## **Threats**

Citizens named loss of quality of life as the biggest threat facing Purcellville in the future. As growth occurs, citizens fear that the burdens of growth may outweigh its benefits. Declining profitability of agriculture is viewed as a threat since cultivated land may give way to development that will change the character of Purcellville. Uncontrollable growth, loss of open space and destruction of historic structures were also identified as potential threats to the area. On the other hand, while certain changes are considered a threat, some residents also feel that resistance to change and lack of improvements to infrastructure may limit possibilities for future growth in the Purcellville area that could benefit the area by bringing jobs and a greater diversity of housing.

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## Opportunities

Several citizens of the Purcellville area believe that the planning process now underway will provide an important opportunity for well planned and orderly growth. Equally important is the opportunity to rejuvenate the existing Town by planning for and encouraging development on undeveloped land within the Town first. The potential for regional public facilities such as sewer and water were also viewed as opportunities. Residents also believe that a widened Route 7 Bypass, and the completion of the Dulles Greenway will influence the Purcellville area in the future. The potential to develop an adequate road network to serve new development and to provide incentives for open space preservation were listed as opportunities. Finally, citizens cited opportunities to build on existing positive attributes of the community such as Valley Industrial Park and the W&OD bike trail.

## Community Workshop Two

Throughout the discussion at the first workshop, there were common concerns that ranked high in both discussion groups. Using the concerns as discussion topics, participants at the second workshop evaluated the current policy direction for the UGA as set out in the Choices & Changes General Plan to see if the policies are headed in the right direction.

### Community Design

Participants at the second Purcellville workshop generally agreed with General Plan policies recommending residential development in the Urban Growth Area, if the new development complements and enhances the existing Town and if the new development looks similar to existing development within the Town. Despite this general agreement, there are some concerns about what development densities are appropriate in the UGA. There was also support for certain types of business development in the UGA. Overall, area residents support mixed residential, business and industrial development within the UGA as long as such development in the UGA supports and augments development within the Town.

General Plan policies which recommend that the Town Urban Growth Area be surrounded by a greenbelt were also supported by Purcellville area residents. Residents feel that the greenbelt is needed to ensure that Purcellville maintains its distinct identity and sense of community. In addition, to encourage a compact and efficient development pattern, many citizens support development within the Town corporate limits before the UGA.

### Transportation

Residents agree with General Plan policies that recommend that

### Community Focus

*Community Design*

*Transportation*

*Economic Development*

*Public Facilities and Services*

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developers assist in the construction of regional road improvements in the planning area. Citizens generally supported policies recommending buffering and landscaping of developments located along major roads serving the UGA such as the Route 7 Bypass, Route 287 and Route 7 to preserve the rural character along these roadways. However, there were a number of suggested refinements and revisions to current General Plan transportation policies for the planning area.

There were various concerns about the southern circumferential road alignment proposed to serve the southern portion of the Purcellville Urban Growth Area. Residents suggested refinements ranging from removing the proposed road corridor to reducing the proposed number of lanes from four to two. There were also recommendations that other new collector roads proposed to serve the Urban Growth Area should be two lane facilities. Proposed policy additions include recommending an additional interchange on the Route 7 Bypass at 690, restricting the size of roads in front of schools, and recommending the location of a park and ride facility in the UGA. Residents also highlighted the need to coordinate improvements with neighboring towns, the Town of Purcellville and the Virginia Department of Transportation.

## **Public Utilities and Facilities**

Residents in the Purcellville area agree with General Plan policies which suggest that the Town of Purcellville should continue to be the principal location of new public facilities serving the UGA. Citizens also supported policies suggesting that schools should be located to provide safe and convenient access for students and that the Town and County should coordinate the provision of recreational facilities to avoid duplication of services.

Some of the most significant General Plan policies that will affect development in the Purcellville area address sewer and water service. Citizens supported General Plan policies that all development in the UGA should be served by central sewer and water. However, there were a number of opinions about how sewer and water service should be provided in the UGA and how extensions should be financed. Although workshop participants generally agreed that the Town should be the provider of sewer and water service, there was some support for consideration of regional sewer and water systems. Additionally, feelings were mixed about who should finance sewer and water improvements. Several participants felt sewer and water should be jointly financed by the Town and the development community, as recommended in the General Plan. Others believe that sewer and water improvements should be solely the responsibility of the development community.

There were also differing opinions as to who should fund new facilities and services needed to serve new development. While some workshop participants supported General Plan proffer guidelines that

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suggest that the County, the Town and the development community should share these costs, others believe that new growth should pay its own way.

## **Economic Development**

There is support for General Plan policies that encourage that the Town remain the focus of commercial and non-residential development in the Purcellville area. In fact, citizens feel that the County and Town need to place more emphasis on downtown revitalization. Citizens supported a variety of office and light industrial uses in the Urban Growth Area, as recommended in the *General Plan*, as long as these uses do not detract from the commercial viability of downtown. Support for general industrial uses within the UGA is mixed. Some of the concerns relative to general industrial uses may be addressed through design guidelines aimed at ensuring that such uses are as attractive as possible.

## **Public Comment Meeting**

### **Community Comment**

On December 6, 1993, the Purcellville Urban Growth Area Management Plan Citizens' Committee held a public comment meeting to give citizens the opportunity to make individual comments about issues of concern or specific properties. The Committee received an assortment of comments on various subjects. The process that will be used to develop the plan was of particular concern. Citizens want to be sure that their concerns are considered as decisions are made. Citizens also highlighted the need to coordinate with neighboring communities on issues such as land use and road improvements. Citizens were informed that all of the Citizens' Committee meetings will be open and that the first fifteen minutes of each meeting will be set aside for public comment if anyone wishes to speak.

Additional concerns about annexation were also raised. Some citizens do not wish to be annexed by the Town of Purcellville and are concerned that they will have no voice in annexation decisions. In addition, there were concerns that development in the Urban Growth Area will require road improvements which will jeopardize historic properties. There were related concerns that new development in the UGA will generate public facility and infrastructure costs that the Town and County cannot afford and that the development community will be unable to fund. Phasing of development in the Urban Growth Area was recommended as an option for making growth more orderly and affordable. Finally, the viability of agriculture and the importance of agriculture as an economic resource and a tourist attraction were raised as issues to be considered as the plan is developed. All of these issues will be considered as part of issue papers that will be prepared for review by the Citizens' Committee.

## **Community Input**

*Plan Process*

*Roads*

*Annexation*

*Costs of Growth*

*Agriculture*

*Phasing*

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## Next Steps

The Purcellville public meetings have provided the Purcellville Urban Growth Area Management Plan Citizens' Committee with a substantial amount of information and direction about what is important for the future of the Purcellville area. This information has already begun to form the framework for the Committee's next task of reviewing issue papers that will eventually lead to policy directives. The Committee is also gathering data from the Town's Department of Public Works, the Town of Hamilton, the Virginia Department of Transportation and other agencies to add to its understanding of issues pertinent to the planning area. An initial draft of the Purcellville Urban Growth Area Management Plan is scheduled for completion in the Spring of 1994. Additional public comment meetings will be held once a first draft of the plan is complete.